



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: October 17, 2019

Agenda Item: Stillwater River Conservation Easement, Region 1

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes working with The Trust for Public Land (TPL) to place a conservation easement (CE) on approximately 1,000 acres of important riparian and lowland forestland in northwest Montana, referred to as the Stillwater River CE. TPL, the current owner, would secure a conservation buyer to own and manage the property under the terms of the CE. This donated CE would protect habitat for 42 species of greatest conservation need as identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan, as well as habitat for deer, elk, moose, black bear, mountain lion, wolf, forest grouse, and turkeys. The Stillwater CE property is only 2 miles from the recently completed FWP-held Lazy Creek conservation easement. Conservation of this parcel would protect a key hole in this landscape of public land, ensuring continued habitat connectivity for fish between Upper and Lower Stillwater Lakes as well as wildlife between Glacier National Park across the Flathead Forest all the way to the Cabinet-Yaak. Under the terms of the CE, free public access for hunting, fishing, and other recreation opportunities would be permanently secured.

This parcel is surrounded by public land: to the west, south, and east by the Flathead National Forest, and to the north by the Stillwater State Forest. There are two separate 40-acre parcels of private land adjoining this property. Another partnership is working to place these parcels under private (not held by FWP) conservation easement that would include restrictions for only one home site on each parcel, so impacts from these private lands would be minimal to the area's conservation values.

Public Involvement Process & Results: No formal public involvement has yet occurred. If the commission endorses moving forward with this proposal, FWP would conduct the appropriate due diligence, analysis, and public review processes.

Alternatives and Analysis: Proposal alternatives and analysis would be developed by FWP (upon endorsement by the commission) and released in a draft EA for public review/comment opportunity.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the commission endorse this proposed project to allow the department to continue working with TPL on this proposal to conserve valuable fish and wildlife habitat and public recreational opportunities along the Stillwater River.

Proposed Motion: I move the commission endorse the proposal to further negotiate the Stillwater River Conservation Easement and complete associated analysis.